



**South Carolina Department of Archives & History**  
National Register of Historic Places  
**PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF)**  
*to evaluate National Register eligibility*

Please return to: **South Carolina Department of Archives & History**  
**Historical Services Division**  
**8301 Parklane Road**  
**Columbia, SC 29223-4905**

*Please complete every blank that applies to the property in which you are interested.*

❶ **NAME OF PROPERTY** Hart's Bluff Cemetery

❷ **STREET ADDRESS** 997 Hart's Bluff Rd., Wadmalaw Island, SC

❸ **CITY (OR VICINITY)** Charleston **COUNTY** Charleston

❹ **MAPS**

**Tax Parcel #** 196-00-00-077 **USGS Topo Quad Sheet** Wadmalaw 1960PR71

Attach a county tax map and a USGS Topographic Map. Contact the county assessor's office for a tax map. For a USGS Topographic Map, contact South Carolina Geodetic Survey, 5 Geology Road, Columbia, South Carolina 29212 (Telephone: 803-896-7700), or a topographic map can be downloaded from [www.topozone.com](http://www.topozone.com) or [www.maptech.com](http://www.maptech.com). Mark the location of the property and the boundaries in pencil on both maps.

❺ **OWNER OF PROPERTY** (as recorded in city/county tax or land records)

Name William Baker & Marjery Schramm

Address 1551 Ben Sawyer Blvd. Unit 44

City Mount Pleasant State SC Zip 29464-5511

Telephone (provide area code) Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_

❻ **PROPERTY DESCRIPTION**

Present Use vacant yard area Original Use African American Cemetery in woods

Date(s) of Construction ca. 1890 Date(s) of Major Alterations \_\_\_\_\_

Moved? (check if yes) ☐ Original Location \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of move(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Outbuildings/Other Features Commercial and vernacular markers are present on site. Grave goods are likely present, but buried below grade.

Archaeological Remains/Potential Grave stains and coffin hardware present; human remains present and in excellent condition.

❼ **SIGNIFICANCE OF PROPERTY**

*In the space provided below and on a separate page if necessary, please provide a brief (paragraph or two) statement about **why this property is worthy of recognition** by the National Register of Historic Places. You may wish to consider the following questions when formulating a statement.*

- A. Did an important event happen there? Is it important for its association with the development of a town or community? Was it used, for instance, as a meeting place of an important local organization? Is it the site of an important battle of the American Revolution or Civil War?
- B. Who built it and when? Who lived there over the years? Can you document that he/she/they were prominent or important in the community, county, region, state of South Carolina, or nation? Did they live or work there during the productive years of their lives?
- C. Did an architect, landscape architect, or master carpenter/brickmason design and/or build it? If so, please provide biographical information on him or her.

## 7 SIGNIFICANCE OF PROPERTY *continued*

*Please include copies of pertinent sources, including summaries of interviews and documents that are not readily available. **Do not send copies of pages from secondary sources unless they are from a rare book.** In researching the history of the property, check records at your local library, church, historical society, and county courthouse. Interviews with local historians may also yield information. Label all published sources with the name of the author, name of publication and publisher, date and place of publication, and page number(s). In the case of unpublished manuscripts, provide the name and page number(s) of the particular document, the name of the document collection, and the name and location of the repository.*

*Use the space below for your statement of significance.*

Hart's Bluff Cemetery (also known as simply Hart's Cemetery) is an African American burial ground on the north side of Wadmalaw Island overlooking the Wadmalaw River and Sound in Charleston County, SC. Today there are 37 marked graves on the property, dating from as early as 1890 to as late as 1981. Additional graves are present, still today identified as collapsed vaults. Other graves, no longer easily recognizable, are present based on oral history, historic documentation, and archaeological investigations.<sup>1</sup>

Historical research has taken the ownership of the property back to Joseph Stanyarne in the eighteenth century. The 510 acre plantation passed from Stanyarne to Nathaniel Cudsworth and from Cudsworth to John Splatt Cripps. By 1790 the property, consisting of the main parcel and two islands, was combined by Francis Fickling.<sup>2</sup> A plat of the plantation shows much cultivated land, although no unexpectedly the cemetery is not illustrated (its location was wooded at the time of the plat's creation – typical of slave cemeteries). In 1806 the plantation was conveyed by Fickling to John Smelie and in 1817 Benjamin Witter, executor of John Smelie, sold the property to W.J. Wescoat.<sup>3</sup> Wescoat failed to make the mortgage on the property and in 1826 it was sold by the Sheriff to James W. Monk.<sup>4</sup> Monk sold the property, only four years later, to Mark L. Williams.<sup>5</sup> Both of these conveyances, however, were for only 120 acres – it appears that only a portion of Wescoat's property was actually sold; he continued to hold the remainder of the tract since the meets and bounds make reference to W. Wescoat owning the lands to the west. This suggests that the portion of the parcel today containing the burial grounds continued to be held by Wescoat throughout these transactions. Through uncertain means – probably marriage – the property is next found in the ownership of Benjamin Freeman when in 1850 he sold a 334 acre tract to Dr. O.J. Hart.<sup>6</sup> Hart continued to operate the plantation through the late antebellum, holding the property until his death. In 1899 the land, excepting the two islands, passed to his children.<sup>7</sup> Gradually, over the next 32 years, J. Townsend Hart acquired the interests of the other heirs.<sup>8</sup> J. Townsend Hart held the property until his death, with his 1937 will passing all his real estate and personal property to his sister, Sarah E. Hart. A few years later, in 1940, Sarah Hart devised the land to her nephew, William Lee Hart.<sup>9</sup>

The first plat of the cemetery was prepared in 1952 during the ownership of William Lee Hart.<sup>10</sup> In 1957 the property passed from William Lee Hart to his wife, Catherine F. Hart and in 1974 it passed from Catherine F. Hart to her children. The next plat of the property was prepared for the Catherine Hart estate in August 1982.<sup>11</sup>

Historical research concerning the plantation suggests that it held about 20 slaves prior to its acquisition by Hart, who expanded the operation and, probably the number of slaves. It seems likely, given the death rate among slaves at cotton and rice plantations, that a cemetery would be necessary. The location of this cemetery is documented by at least 1890 (the earliest marked grave), when it was situated at the edge of a cultivated field in an area of oak and hickory woods – typical of slave cemetery locations.<sup>12</sup>

As part of the investigations, SC Death Certificates, City of Charleston Death Cards, and African American funeral home records were examined. The best estimate is that from ca. 1890 to 1996 there were approximately 354 burials. If the cemetery began – as we believe is likely – then the number of burials in cemetery is over 700.<sup>13</sup>

Archaeological investigations at the site included the use of ground penetrating radar (GPR)<sup>14</sup>, penetrometer, and limited stripping (with the knowledge of the Charleston County Coroner and the Charleston County Sheriff). Both GPR and penetrometer were consistent in the identification of remains. The stripped areas clearly revealed rectangular grave stains, as well as the presence of buried metal funeral home plats, wire flower stands, coffin hardware, and isolated human remains in excellent condition. The size of the cemetery, based on the congruence of the different techniques is approximates 180 feet east-west by 200 feet north-south.

This site clearly represents the “typical” African American burying ground – situated on the edge of a cultivated field in an area of hardwood growth. Such locations were isolated and in areas that – at the time – were deemed marginal. Today they represent prime real estate, often being in close proximity to water (as is the case of this cemetery). The cemetery contains a relatively small number of commercial markers, concrete markers, vault top markers, and military stones.

Virtually every traditional low country African American cemetery contains only a very small proportion of the total number of graves being marked by commercial markers. The low density of these “traditional” markers may be interpreted as indicative of poverty, but we believe that it is also indicative of an African American tradition that focuses on the place, rather than the individual grave.

There are also several graves marked by iron pipes or rods. While these may be interpreted as another sign of poverty, there is equal evidence that they represent very traditional marking using conduits for the soul’s release and return to Africa.<sup>15</sup> In a similar fashion the use of funeral home markers may not be so much a sign of poverty or lack of care, as a representation of African American impermanent marking. This is a recognition, again, that the importance is not a particular grave or plot, rather that that individual rests with ancestors. The Hart’s Bluff Cemetery also illustrates examples of “living memorials” – the use of plantings to commemorate an individual’s life and mark their grave. This is a very traditional African American practice.

Also present are burial vaults – both brick vaults that were hand crafted (and likely earlier) and modern concrete vaults provided by the funeral home. We see in these an evolution of mortuary behavior. Both allow the placement of the coffin in a dry, secure location, rather than in a direct earth contact. A variety of similar practices have been documented at the cemeteries of Albany, Georgia.<sup>16</sup>

The investigations also clearly document that archaeological remains are present with a very high level of integrity. Feature stains – specifically the outlines of grave shafts – are clearly defined and easily recognizable. Coffin hardware is intact and well preserved with minimal corrosion (and much hardware is likely to be white metal which would be preserved even better than light stamped iron). Human remains are also present and in excellent condition, allowing study of metric and non-metric bioanthropological topics such as diet and disease. Coupled with African American cemeteries frequently exhibit kin-based burial patterning, this allows for the study of kin-based groups.

## ⑧ PHOTOGRAPHS

*Send at least six (6) clear photographs showing the front, side and rear elevations, additions, interior, and outbuildings, and at least two (2) additional photos of the surroundings. Take extra shots of significant interior and exterior details. Label each photograph with the name of the property, what the photograph shows, the name of the photographers, and the date taken. Either write the information on the back of the photo with a soft lead pencil or permanent ink marker, attach a post-it note to the back, or attach a list of the photos.*

***Photographs cannot be returned.***

### PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) COMPLETED BY:

Name Michael Trinkley, Chicora Foundation, Inc.  
Address PO Box 8664  
City Columbia State SC Zip 29202  
Phone (include area code) H  W 803-787-6910  
E-mail address trinkley@chicora.org  
Date Completed 2/26/07

### DID YOU REMEMBER TO ENCLOSE:

☒ County Tax Map  
☒ USGS Topo Map  
☒ Photos (exterior, interior & setting)  
☒ Copies of Sources  
☒ Statement of significance

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Michael Trinkley, *Investigations at the Hart's Bluff Cemetery, Wadmalaw Island, Charleston County, South Carolina*, Research Contribution 428 (Columbia: Chicora Foundation, Inc., 2005).
- <sup>2</sup> Charleston County RMC, DB G9, pg. 55.
- <sup>3</sup> Charleston County RMC, DB G9, pg. 55.
- <sup>4</sup> Charleston County RMC, DB S9, pg. 424.
- <sup>5</sup> Charleston County RMC, DB B10, pg. 164.
- <sup>6</sup> Charleston County RMC, DB G12, pg. 22.
- <sup>7</sup> Charleston County Will Book T, pg. 611.
- <sup>8</sup> Charleston County RMC, DB F24, pg. 238; DB N25, pg. 319; DB U25, pg. 185; DB E35, pg. 517; DB Z36, pg. 249.
- <sup>9</sup> Charleston County Probate 776-18; Charleston County RMC, DB X38, pg. 169; Charleston County Probate 803-27.
- <sup>10</sup> Charleston County RMC, PB H, pg. 141.
- <sup>11</sup> Charleston County Probate 868-90; Charleston County Probate 76-450-23; Charleston County RMC, PB AX, pg. 131.
- <sup>12</sup> Trinkley, *Investigations*, pp. 7-10.
- <sup>13</sup> Trinkley, *Investigations*, pp. 11-16.
- <sup>14</sup> Conducted by General Engineering Geophysics in 2004.
- <sup>15</sup> Cynthia Conner, *"Sleep On and Take Your Rest": Black Mortuary Behavior on the East Branch of the Cooper River, South Carolina* (Columbia: M.A. Thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of South Carolina, 1989).
- <sup>16</sup> Michael Trinkley, *Variation in Brick Vaults or Ledgers at Oakview Cemetery, Albany, Georgia* (Columbia: Chicora Foundation, Inc., 2003).



Entrance to property and cemetery (cemetery in background). View toward the Wadmalaw River (north)



Example of commercial stone – B. J. Hart, born June 8, 1856, died April 5, 1917. This is one of four stones marking graves of individuals born into slavery.





Stone of Augustus Middleton, who died on October 16, 1890.



Example of a vault marker, common at rural low country African American cemeteries. This is for Bertha Sams, born in 1900 and died in 1992.





Example of a concrete marker. Ella Roper, born in 1870, died February 27, 1926.



Example of a living memorial – another traditional form of marking African American graves in the lowcountry.





Example of an iron bar used to mark a grave. The use of such impermanent markers is typical in undisturbed traditional African American low country cemeteries.



Example of coffin stain revealed during investigations at the site.





Example of coffin hardware identified during investigations at the site.



Metal funeral home marker – another common form of impermanent marker used in traditional African American cemeteries that had fallen into a grave depression and been covered under exposed by investigations.



Isolated human tibia recovered during investigations at the cemetery. This shows the excellent condition of the human remains present in the cemetery, documenting the site's suitability for forensic investigations.



## Charleston County

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Charleston County GIS

4045 Bridge View Drive

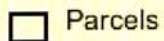
North Charleston, SC 29405-7464

### Legend



Selected Features

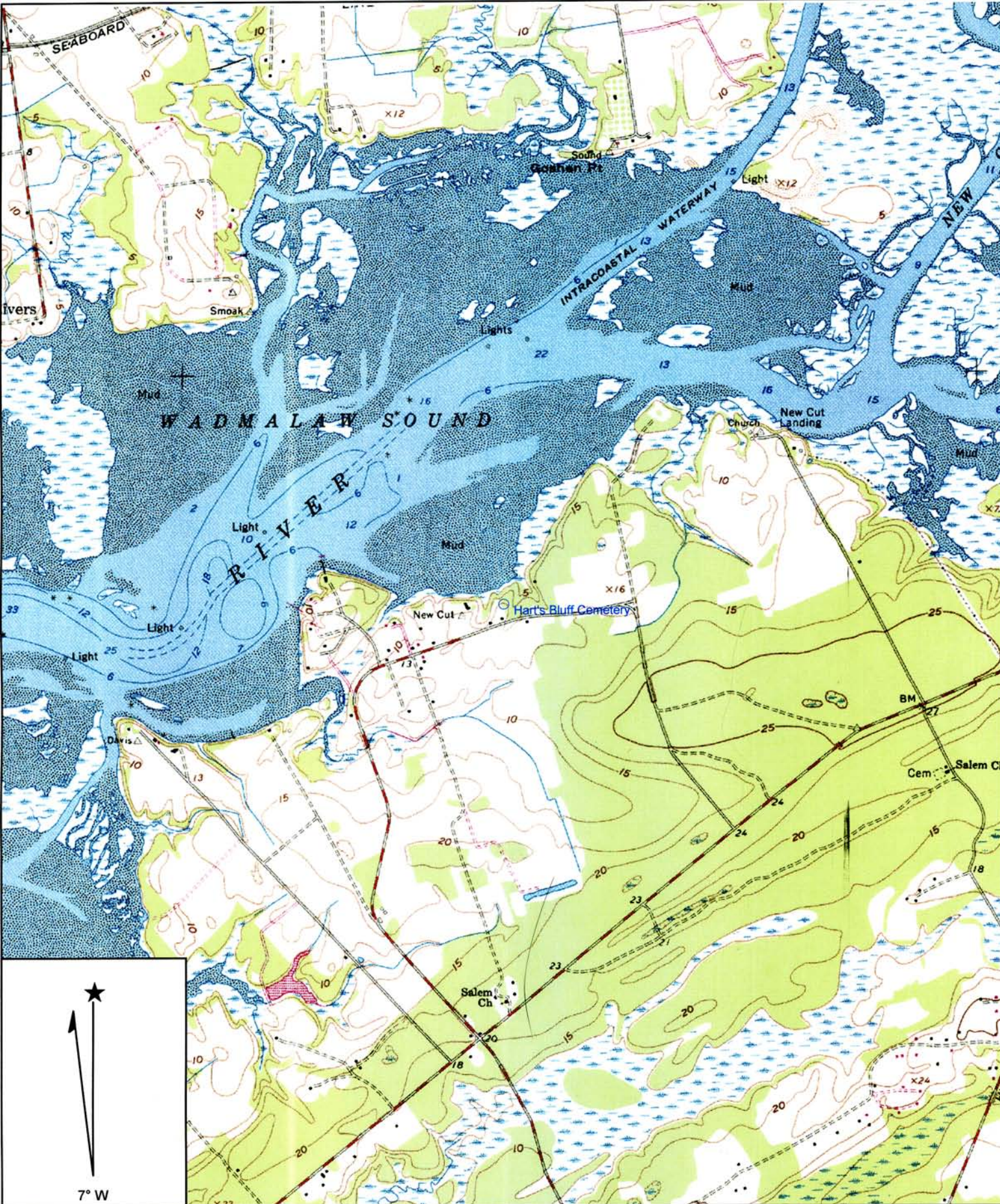
Streets/Roads



Parcels







Name: WADMALAW ISLAND  
 Date: 2/24/2007  
 Scale: 1 inch equals 2000 feet

Location: 17 0575775 E 3617927 N  
 Caption: Hart's Bluff Cemetery  
 Wadmalaw Island  
 Charleston Co., SC